

Request for Initial Proposal (RFIP) for Continued Operation of the Transportation Environmental Resource Center (TERC)

I. Summary

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has funded the development and operation of ten Compliance Assistance Centers (Centers) to help small and medium size businesses better understand and comply with environmental regulations. The EPA seeks to partner with an eligible applicant meeting certain legal and programmatic eligibility criteria to continue maintenance of the Transportation Center. This request for an initial proposal (RFIP) solicits applications from trade associations and universities. EPA requests that initial proposals be submitted to EPA by 5 P.M., Friday, March 28, 2003 (30 days from the posting of this RFIP). In the second step or Request for Final Proposal (RFP), EPA will invite all applicants who meet the threshold criteria to submit a more detailed proposal for the maintenance and operation of the Center for the Transportation Industry. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose detailed proposal is ranked highest by EPA management.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number and title for this project is # 66.305, Compliance Assistance Support for Services to the Regulated Community and other Assistance Providers. (See the web-site at www.cfda.gov) An estimate of the Federal funds available for this award is approximately \$600,000 over a 5-year period. The EPA will initially fund on a one year basis and will consider funding the balance of the yearly budget requests contingent upon satisfactory progress as certified by the EPA Project Officer, the availability of funds, and EPA priorities. Funding is contingent upon the EPA receiving its final approved budget in each year.

II. Background

The purpose of the RFIP is to solicit applications from non profit organizations, and universities to manage and maintain a national compliance assistance center for the transportation industry. The Transportation Environmental Resource Center (TERC) is currently funded by a cooperative agreement that expires in May 2003. Under the new Grants Competition Policy beginning October 1, 2002, EPA implemented its policy for competing cooperative agreements and grants. These requirements apply to all assistance totaling more than \$75,000 per year.

The objective of this proposed Center is to serve as the “first-stop” for easy to understand information on complying with EPA statutes and rules with How-to-Comply guides, plain-language fact sheets tailored specifically to environmental issues associated with the Transportation Industry (including airports, air carriers, railroads, motor carriers and water transportation). The Center must be kept up to date on environmental issues associated with the Transportation Industry. To achieve this goal, the applicant must:

- Work with established partnerships and develop new partnerships with the transportation

business community, federal regulatory agencies, and the compliance assistance provider communities to understand transportation industry environmental compliance issues.

- Develop and maintain content (including, regulatory and pollution prevention information) that will assist the Transportation Industry in complying with EPA statutes and rules.
- Utilize industry communication channels to promote/disseminate this information on a timely basis to the various transportation groups/associations.

The EPA has sponsored partnerships with industry, academics, environmental groups and other Agencies to establish Centers for ten industry and government sectors. The Centers provide comprehensive, easy to understand sector-specific compliance information. In 1998, after extensive discussion with transportation trade associations, it was agreed that EPA would award a cooperative agreement to the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE). They currently operate the Transportation Environmental Resource Center website at www.transource.org. The American Association of Airport Executives works with various transportation trade associations, in particular trade associations that represent the motor carriers, airports, air carriers, railroads, and water transportation such as barging and trans-ocean freight hauling to identify and develop environmental compliance content that helps the transportation industry comply with EPA statutes and rules. The web-site assists the regulated community to better understand their compliance responsibilities with applicable EPA environmental requirements by making it easily available through the Internet.

In accordance with EPA policy encouraging competition for assistance agreements, the Agency seeks proposals from qualified applicants who can partner with the EPA, various transportation trade associations and other interested parties to effectively support the development and maintenance of a transportation environmental compliance center and provide outreach efforts to transportation entities. In FY 2001, in response to a Congressional earmark, EPA awarded a cooperative agreement to National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (NCMS) to expand the Centers program. Under this cooperative agreement, NCMS has developed a web-based "Platform" to efficiently launch new Centers and support existing Centers. The Platform includes a suite of comprehensive web-based tools necessary to create a full-featured Center. Center grantees are invited to partner with NCMS to support the operation of existing Centers, and the development of new Centers. (If the applicant partners with NCMS for web capacity and services, they would need to pay NCMS for services and should include this in the budget estimates.)

III. Purpose of the Transportation Center

Seven trade associations and professional associations in conjunction with the EPA formed a partnership to launch a multimedia environmental resource center, TERC, to serve airports and airlines, railroads, barging, ports and motor carrier. The Transportation Environmental Resource Center provides environmental compliance information to help the

industry comply with EPA statutes and rules, and where applicable pollution prevention information through the web-site. The Center seeks to identify up-to-date environmental compliance information and to make that information available to transportation professionals and the public. The information is presented in clear, easy to read language. The Center seeks comments and feedback from users to continually improve the content and usability of the web-site. There is a Forum where industry members can post questions and receive answers to questions from other environmental overseers, as well as obtain up-to-date news and calendar of events. The Center is currently managed by the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) (at www.transource.org), with the trucking page managed by the American Trucking Association.

Many other transportation associations have contributed ideas for the design and content of the current Center: American Waterways Operators, Association of American Railroads, American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, Air Transport Association of America, and the Regional Airline Association.

The primary objective for the Center is to serve as the “first-stop” for transportation professional, managers, staff and workers in obtaining timely, easy to understand compliance information that helps the industry comply with EPA statutes and rules. The material is tailored specifically to the Transportation Industry.

IV. Technical Components of the Current Transportation Center

The Transportation Center currently uses Cold Fusion. It has a minimum amount of broad band demand so that it loads quickly. It has been tested for use on Internet Explorer as well as Netscape. In the past there were well more than 10,000 hits per month to the web-site at www.transource.org and more than 1,300 user sessions for the GreenTruck page.

This is provided for informational purposes only. Applicants can propose alternative approaches to carrying out the objectives of the center.

V. Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be a nonprofit organization as that term is defined in Section 4(6) of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law 96-107, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. Colleges, universities, and community colleges are eligible to apply. However, nonprofit organizations as described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. In addition, for profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs is not applicable to this request for an initial proposal.

VI. Required Application and Threshold Criteria Information

There is no standard governmental form for interested parties to submit their initial proposal. The prospective grantee must include the following general information.

- Name of Organization
- Description of Organization (associated members, if any, purpose/function of the organization)
- Address, City, State and Zip
- Telephone and Facsimile Number
- Responsible Official with email address

Submitted applications must answer the following six threshold criteria with verifiable documentation on how their organization meets all of the following threshold criteria.

- Applicant can demonstrate that it has a financial management and time management system in place that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular (A-21 for Universities and A-122 for non profit organizations).
- Applicant can demonstrate that an indirect cost rate has been approved by a federal agency or has a cost allocation system that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular.
- Applicant can demonstrate a previous working relationship(s) and ability to develop new relationships with sector experts (e.g., trade associations) and/or businesses within the transportation (airports, air carriers, railroads, motor carriers and water transportation) sector.
- Applicant can demonstrate an understanding of the environmental needs of the transportation sector through past activities.
- Applicant has the hardware and web-based expertise to manage the Transportation Center.
- Applicant can demonstrate previous experience in managing and maintaining web-based services.

The response to these six criteria should be no greater than ten (10) pages. The response to the RFIP must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 P.M., Friday, March 28, 2003. Applicants must clearly mark any data that the applicant considers being Confidential Business Information (CBI). If necessary, EPA will make final confidential business information determinations under 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B.

VII. Pre-application Assistance

Eligible and interested applicants may contact Joseph Hall (202/564-2271) with questions regarding eligibility and threshold criteria. The Agency will post answers to significant or frequently asked questions on www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html. Applicants are encouraged to review these questions and answers prior to submitting their initial proposals.

VIII. Evaluation Process.

An EPA evaluation panel will review the initial proposals on a “pass/fail” basis and make recommendations to senior management in the Office of Compliance. Applicants must meet the eligibility of **all** six threshold criteria to be invited to submit a more detailed final proposal. The EPA will notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants of the RFIP process.

All successful applicants that met the threshold criteria will be requested to submit a more detailed final proposal for the maintenance and operation of the Center for the Transportation Industry. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose final proposal best meets the criteria as set out in the Request for Final Proposal. The Request for Final Proposal package can be found at:
www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html

IX. Initial Proposal Submission

Interested applicants can submit their application package by mail, email or facsimile no later than 5:00 P.M., Friday, March 28, 2003 to:

Mr. Joseph Hall (2224A)
US Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Compliance
Room 7045B
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460
Telephone (202) 564-2271
facsimile: (202) 564-0009
email: hall.joseph@epa.gov

Information submitted to address the six threshold criteria should not exceed ten (10) total pages. Applicants meeting all criteria will be invited to submit a proposal for management and operation of the Transportation Center. The EPA expects to notify all applicants of their eligibility to continue on to the final proposal by Friday, April 4, 2003. Any disputes that arise during the selection process will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR 330.63 and Part 31, subpart F. (See web-site at www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html)

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no award. EPA is currently under continuing resolution and OECA will not be able to fund the project until its budget for 2003 receives final approval.